

## NEXT ISSUE

Jayne Mansfield made herself a movie star. No other do-it-yourselfer can make that statement. Cannily playing the role of dumb blonde with a determination to let nothing stop her, she parlayed an eye-popping, pink-all-over figure and a genius for uttering zany but quotable trivia into a solidly established career that now earns her some half-million dollars a year. In a saucy, revealing article Jayne very frankly tells writer Ed Gibbons how she did it. Read "Intimate Look at Jayne Mansfield" in the August issue of CLIMAX.

Three years ago the American public was subjected to a cloudburst of publicity about pega palo, the "miraculous" vine that grows in the Dominican Republic. A Texan signed a \$27-million contract for U.S. sales' rights. And before the government banned its sale, it was touted as the long-sought fountain of youth for debilitated males. Then it was blasted as a dubious, unknown quantity. Ever since, U.S. men have been wondering if pega palo was a boon or a bust. For the hilarious and informative story behind the story, by the man who started all the furor, read "What Happened To Pega Palo" in CLIMAX next month.

Lucia was the kind of a girl who spelled trouble, and trouble was what Ned got when she disappeared from his cabin on Longboat Island... mysterious prowlers, a bucketful of \$100-bills, and then they found Lucia's body washed up on the rocks. There were lots of questions, but Ned didn't have the answers. Oddly enough, the only one who didn't think he was the killer was the murdered girl's beautiful sister. Read this action-packed, suspenseful book-length mystery, "Murder on the Rocks," in CLIMAX next month.

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# CLIMAX

EXCITING STORIES FOR MEN

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# Fighting Is For Men

"I killed Cal Brannon in the ring and it was an accident," he said quietly,  
"but scribblers like you figure it's better copy to see it some other way"

By JACK RITCHIE

WHEN Ray Holden appeared at my table, I knew from his ferret smile that he was going to tell me something I wouldn't like. I didn't ask him to sit down, but nothing like that ever stops Holden. He pulled out a chair and enjoyed telling me what Phil Brannon was going to do.

When he was through, he smiled and waited.

I finished my coffee slowly and listened to the buzz of voices in the restaurant. I pretended some interest as I watched a waiter carry a tray of dishes to the kitchen.

"Well?" Ray's voice was a little impatient.

I put down my cup gently. "Did Brannon think this up all by himself or were you there to nudge him along?"

He smiled again. "I mentioned that there was a lack of tears on your part. He seemed to feel that something should be done about that."

I met Ray's eyes and spoke quietly. "I do my crying when I'm alone. I killed Phil's brother in the ring and it was an accident. But I guess scribblers like you figure it's better copy to see it some other way."

He lit a cigarette and blew smoke my way. "As an unbiased sports reporter, I saw you beat Cal Brannon to a pulp. Nobody but you did that."

"He was on his feet and in the ring," I said evenly. "It was up to the referee to stop it if he thought anything would happen. Why not ask him about that?"

Ray wasn't interested. He grinned sardonically. "Should I write that you're contributing your share of the purse to the next of kin? Or maybe you're not that sorry about what happened?"

I brushed some of the smoke away from my face. "Ray," I said softly. "I don't like trouble, but your talk

is begging for it." He was silent for several seconds.

Manny Sundee, my manager, came into the restaurant then and pulled out a chair beside me. His eyes flicked over Holden distastefully. "Goodbye, Ray," he said.

Holden crossed his legs. "I just been telling your boy Riley the latest news. Cal Brannon's brother is picking up the gloves. He's looking forward to meeting your property in the ring."

Manny paid no attention to him. He picked up the menu. Ray's smile got an inch bigger. "Phil Brannon was perfect as an amateur, a sure shot for the big time, but he stopped and pointed himself toward college."

Manny's face was expressionless. "I would have sworn I heard you say goodbye."

Ray tapped his cigarette over the ash tray and got to his feet slowly. He smiled smugly as he walked away.

Manny watched him return to his table and stiffened. "That's Mavis Brannon at his table."

"Yes," I said quietly. "She came in with Ray. The little man with them is a photographer. He's got the machine under the table and he's waiting."

Manny frowned. "I got a bet with myself that Ray cooked up something. Maybe she's supposed to scratch your face and go into hysterics." He shifted uneasily in his chair. "This is a good time for us to get up and leave."

"No, Manny," I said. "I'm not running away." I smiled slightly and pointed to the menu in his hand. "Order yourself something. I recommend the planked steak."

Across the room, Mavis met my eyes for a moment and then turned her head away. Her hair was a luster of gold and there was the calmness of complete self-possession in her face.

ILLUSTRATED BY PHIL BERRY



And the coldness too. I was familiar with that look. It had been in her eyes when I met her for the first time in the waiting room of the hospital. I stood before them, before Mavis and Phil Brannon, and I had tried to explain to them how I felt about what I had done to their brother.

They had stared at me, their eyes icy, and I knew I was talking to people who didn't want to know that I was sorry. When my words were through, there had been nothing for me to do but walk back to my side of the room and wait through the quietness of the long night for what we knew would happen.

It was five o'clock in the morning when Cal Brannon died.

Now I took my eyes off Mavis and watched Manny signal for a waiter. "I still think we ought to leave," he said sourly.

I shook my head. "We might as well stay. If she's got a scene in mind I wouldn't make it to the door anyway."

I SIPPED another cup of coffee while Manny finished his meal. When he was through, he sat back and brought out a cigar. "On the other hand, she might only be supposed to haunt you. Everywhere you travel, there will be those accusing eyes."

I looked at him. "Shut up, Manny."

He smiled faintly. "Excuse it. I'm on your side so why should I be bitter with you?"

I watched Mavis Brannon get to her feet and I rose automatically as she reached our table. The cameraman at Ray's table got ready for a picture.

"Pick any chair you want," Manny told her dryly. "Favor your best profile."

Her eyes were more violet than blue and they met mine. The camera flashed and I closed my eyes until the big spot melted a little. When I opened them, she was still watching me steadily.

"I'd like to talk to you about my brother," she said. "The one who's still alive."

Manny rolled the cigar in his mouth. "All right," he said. "What are we supposed to do? Meet him in the Garden next week?"

She was about to answer him but then she turned back to me with a trace of curiosity in her eyes. "Are you afraid too?"

"We're not afraid of anybody," Manny said. "It's not in our tiger nature. But just the same, we're not getting into the ring with him now or ever."

The slight smile didn't extend to her eyes. "I'm not here to argue for it. I don't want that to happen either."

Manny's face was puzzled as he glanced at Ray's table and then back to Mavis.

"Yes," Mavis said. "Ray brought me here. But I don't imagine he expected me to feel this way about it."

Manny scratched his head. "You got any special reasons why you don't want to see it happen?"

"I don't want Phil in the ring," she said evenly. "With anybody. He has a future. I don't want him to throw that away just to become another stupid fighter."

Manny grinned. "Suppose he turned out to be a great stupid fighter? That's a possibility to consider."

Her voice was bitter. "I have no intention of burying another brother. Even if it is the result of what some people choose to call an accident."

She turned abruptly to me. "I understand it is customary to offer your share of the purse to the survivors

of the man you kill." She said it with bitterness.

I realized that my hands were ice cold. "Yes," I said. "It's customary for the killer to do that."

Her words were blunt. "Cal left no one behind but Phil and me. Phil doesn't want any part of the money. Since he feels that way, I'll have to refuse too."

She regarded us coolly for 15 seconds and then walked away.

Manny and I were silent and he watched me. Finally he smiled almost sadly. "Have you ever considered that she might not look at you even if you weren't a fighter?"

I looked down at my clenched hand. "Just how good a fighter am I, Manny?"

He took the cigar out of his mouth. "Not one of the great ones, Billy. But too good to quit because of what happened, if that's what you're thinking. You got a smart manager and that will help you. One day we'll be champ and we'll hold onto the title a couple of years. Then you can retire and talk to boys' clubs."

During the next six months I slipped back into the routine and tried to forget about Cal Brannon. In Chicago I put away an old pro in the fourth round and then we traveled west to the Cow Palace in San Francisco. I went easy with a local favorite and was satisfied with just the decision. He had talent, but he needed experience and I didn't want to put a real bad spot on his record so early in his career.

Late in September Manny's cross-country phone calls paid off and we went back to New York for a bout with Eddie Wheat. Since Marciano hung up the gloves, a lot of people figure he's the best heavy around.

I'd just finished showering after a workout at Stillman's gym when Manny walked into the locker room.

"Take a guess who's on the card with you Friday night," he said. "I'm talking about the opener."

I wiped my neck and ears. "The poster says Morey and Conrad start things. But your face tells me there's been a change."

Manny smiled and sat down on the bench between the lockers. "Morey picked up the flu bug. Phil Brannon is substituting. Perhaps the name is familiar?"

I slipped into my shirt and didn't say anything.

"He joined the Fight of the Month Club," Manny said. "Six months, six bouts, six knockouts. A short record, but a merry one."

I buttoned my shirt. "How about it Manny? Did he meet anybody we ever heard of?"

MANNY shrugged. "A flock of truck drivers fighting for a few extra bucks to pay for the wife's operation."

Friday evening when Manny and I got to the arena, I let him go on alone to the dressing rooms with the equipment. I walked down to ringside and got the loan of a seat in the press section. At eight o'clock, the first of the prelim boys climbed into the ring and I got my look at Phil Brannon without a shirt on. He was bigger than his brother had been, with broad heavy shoulders and corn-yellow hair. He carried the 220 pounds without any of it overlapping his waistband.

His eyes traveled around the ringside and I wondered if Mavis was somewhere out there in the audience, or whether she couldn't watch her brother fight.

I turned back to the ring and studied Phil Brannon's face. I hoped he would never have the expression in his eyes that I had seen in his brother's just before he collapsed in the ring.

Ten seconds after the bell sounded it was easy to see what kind of a fight it was going to be. Both Conrad and Brannon were flatfooted sluggers, but Brannon had the faster hands and he was younger. It was the brand of pier brawl the crowd loves. Neither one of the contestants knew a thing about defense and neither one of them worried about it.

Both of them survived the first round. Conrad was staggered twice while it lasted, but a lot of his leather found its mark too.

The second round found them still looking fresh, but in half a minute Brannon was exchanging two for one and they were adding up fast. It took another 60 seconds of wild punching before Brannon drove home the one that counted big. Conrad's 36 years caught up with him in a hurry and he crumpled to the canvas. He took the count without twitching.

I searched for Mavis once more and when I couldn't find her, I got up and went back to the dressing room where Manny waited.

"Well?" he asked, grinning. "Is he another Dempsey?"

I shook my head. "He'll be walking on his heels if he doesn't learn something about the trade."

Manny and I got the call to go out at five after nine.

For people who like to see blood, my bout with Wheat was a dull one. Our style and our reflexes were so much alike that there was little of the action that brings the fans out of their seats. We were both boxers and counter-punchers and neither one of us wanted to make the first mistake.

By the seventh, the booing got under Wheat's skin and he opened up a little. When he came in, I dumped him with a left hook. It wasn't the size of the punch that did it; he was off balance. The referee got to three before Eddie managed to untangle himself enough to get up.

Eddie was cautious from then on until the tenth. Then he knew he'd have to take the round to get the decision. Luck was with me again. During a flurry I slipped through a right cross that put him down for a count of six.

The ref gave it to me, 6-4, and both the judges saw it 5-4 and one even.

After I showered and dressed, Manny and I went around the corner to Dominic's Bar. It's a quiet place where we usually have a few drinks to celebrate.

"It was a smart fight," Manny said. "But I got a feeling it won't go down in the books as the Battle of the Century."

"I know," I said. "I heard you booing."

Our drinks came and Max and I clinked glasses. His eyes narrowed as he looked past me. I glanced over my shoulder. Phil Brannon and Ray Holden were taking a table close behind us. Ray met my eyes and grinned. I turned my back on him and sipped my drink.

Manny looked worried. "Ray's building trouble. I can smell it. He knows we always drop in here after a fight."

Manny kept his eyes on his glass. "Even if we should consider it, this Phil character would have to come a long way before we even think of stepping into the ring with him. He hasn't got enough of a reputation for us to bother. I'll lay two to one that Ray told him about a short-cut. A brawl, a lot of publicity, and we got a challenge in our laps that we got to take or look bad."

I downed my drink. "Let's move out of here, Manny. I've had enough fighting for one night."

Brannon's voice was loud behind me. "Don't run away

just because I'm here, Riley." Well, here it is, I thought.

The talk from the tables around us faded and was replaced by the silence of expectation. I dropped a tip on the table and buttoned my suitcoat. Manny and I rose and began walking toward the door.

Brannon got to his feet and he smiled thinly. "Have a drink with me, Riley. My sister might be more particular, but I don't mind."

Manny hesitated, but I shook my head and kept walking. Out on the street we turned and headed for the parking lot. "I don't know if we did right," Manny said dubiously. "It's not going to look good that we walked out without even smart repartee."

I was unlocking the car when Phil Brannon came out of Dominic's. He headed our way, trailed by a straggling of spectators. He stopped three feet away and looked me up and down. His voice was tight. "There's a difference between you and me, Riley. I don't run away from a fight."



"I understand it's customary to offer your share of the purse to the survivors of the man you kill," she said.

I met his eyes briefly. "Let's hope it never happens." Then I turned away and slipped into the car behind the wheel. When I pulled out of the lot, I glanced at the rear mirror. Brannon was standing in the driveway with his hands on his hips. His face was red with the anger of frustration and his lips were moving in a bitter curse.

We drove several blocks to our hotel before Manny spoke. "Billy boy," he said sadly, "you should of clipped him. We got the challenge anyway and no satisfaction to cushion it."

I slept late the next day and when I got up, Manny was waiting for me with a newspaper on his lap. "It is being intimated in print that you're afraid of Phil Brannon," he said. "The color of your backbone has become the subject of public speculation."

"Okay," I said. "I'm naturally yellow. That's why I gunned for a crack at Marciano." (Continued on page 77)



# Fighting Is For Men

continued from page 35

"With Marciano you could of been lion-hearted, but this has got overtones." He folded the paper and sighed. "Why don't we get this business over with, Billy? Give Brannon what he's yelling for."

I sat down in an easy chair. "Suppose he got lucky? That could happen and we'd be set back a couple of years." "Anybody you step into the ring with could get lucky."

I stared at the ceiling. "It wouldn't be much of a fight. Brannon's no ball of fire."

Manny puffed at his cigar. "But it'll draw. You got something against money?"

I closed my eyes. "Okay," Manny said finally. "I agree with you. Money's not everything. You do what your heart tells you to."

When I went downstairs for breakfast, Mavis Brannon was waiting in the lobby.

She studied me for a few moments before she spoke. "I suppose I ought to apologize for what my brother did last night."

I smiled slightly. "It doesn't matter. I usually manage to survive words."

Cold curiosity crept into her eyes. "I'm surprised that it didn't work, though. I understood you fighters have a sort of pride."

"Yes," I said. "After a fashion."

She was silent for half a minute while she measured me. "I wish it had worked," she said finally. "It would have saved me the embarrassment of having to ask you to give Phil a chance to meet you in the ring."

I considered her words and nodded. "It must be quite painful to have to ask me for anything."

Her eyes were steady. "I felt positive that Phil would forget all about fighting if he knew you would never step into the ring with him. Unfortunately I was wrong. He intends to keep on until public opinion forces you to face him."

She seemed to think about it before she decided to put her hand on my arm. "There's only one way to make him stop. And that's to give him the chance he wants right now."

I looked down at her hand.

Mavis went on. "I don't know much about boxing. I've never been to any of Phil's fights. But I do read the newspapers and I do know what he looks like for days after he's had one. Phil just isn't good enough. He takes too much punishment and I know as well as anyone else what that will do to him after a while. And I also know that he'll quit the ring after he meets you. That was his whole purpose to begin with."

I smiled and met her eyes. "How about having dinner with me this evening while we talk this over?"

She paused and then her voice was expressionless. "If it's necessary."

I felt my face reddening. "No. It isn't." I began walking away. "I'll see that your brother gets his fight without that sacrifice."

"One other thing," she said, almost sharply.

"I know," I said. "You want me to go easy on him."

The next day Manny phoned Brannon's manager and we had no trouble coming to terms.

The newspapers got on to the bout and the good tickets went fast. The odds were common sense in the beginning,

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four to one, but when sentiment money for Brannon flooded in, they were brought down to eight to five.

At the weigh-in, Brannon scaled 221 and I pushed the needle over to my usual 195.

I ate my big meal at one o'clock and then tried for some rest until fight time. Manny and I got to the arena at seven and began getting ready to go on. I watched him put the gauze on my hands. "Manny," I said. "You never asked me what it's like to have to get into the ring with the brother of the man you killed."

He eyed me. "Maybe I'm not curious. But go ahead. Talk yourself into nervousness."

The muscles in the back of my neck were tight and my head ached a little. I closed my eyes and listened to the crowd noises beyond the door.

Manny sighed. "I look at you when you're thinking like that and I want to put my hand on your shoulder. I'm your friend, Billy."

**WE** got the call at 9:05 and went out into the arena. The parade of ring celebrities and our introductions took about ten minutes and then we listened to the referee's instructions. Brannon yawned and there was confident insolence in his face.

I glanced idly past him as the ref recited the usual words and my body tensed. Mavis Brannon was in one of the ringside press seats sitting next to Ray Holden. I met her eyes, but there was nothing in them that I could read.

When the ref was through, Manny and I returned to our corner with our seconds and I slipped the robe off my shoulders. At the bell I took a tired breath and walked out.

We moved around each other and he put out a couple of slow lefts that I gloved aside without trouble. I showed him how a jab was supposed to work and reddened his cheekbone with three sharp ones. For two and a half minutes I gave him a boxing lesson and the steam in him built up until he lost his temper.

He dropped his arms and came in swinging. I kept back-pedaling until he was practically on his knees trying to reach me with a long one. When he pulled himself together for another try, I stepped in with a straight left. For a second he was wide open. His chin was clear and should have had a target painted on it. But I hesitated, and the moment was gone.

In the second Brannon came out giving the boxer stance one more honest try. I went in close and put a few short chips to the ribs. When he remembered that there was such a thing as infighting, I tied him up. The ref parted us and Brannon settled down to stalk me. I evaded him without straining myself and occasionally put out a left that reinforced the glare of irritation in his eyes. I kept one eye on the clock and when there was ten seconds left in the round, I moved in and planted four straight lefts in his face. He was backing up, anticipating the sting of the fifth, when the bell rang.

"Fine," Manny said dryly. "You actually hit him. Not hard, but you did hit him. And at this time I'd like to remind you that you have a right hand."

The third and the fourth rounds were much the same as the first two. Brannon slaughtered the air close to me until he became arm-weary and I put out a left now and then just to let him know I was still there.

Brannon left himself open most of

the time, but I never let my right hand accept the invitation. I was going to take this fight on points alone and nobody was going to get hurt. I hoped Mavis could see that.

Toward the end of the fifth, Brannon walked into one of my left hooks. His right knee touched the canvas, but he was up before the referee could begin to count. A gash of about an inch and a half appeared on the side of Brannon's nose and bright blood trickled from it. I kept my left away from the cut and concentrated on light body punches until the bell.

Manny handed me the bottle. "I now noticed Brannon's sister in the crowd. Her face got pale when she saw her brother's blood. Is this something that concerns you?"

Manny met my eyes and I could tell he knew why I was taking it easy with Brannon. It wasn't because I was thinking of Cal Brannon. I turned my head away and waited for the bell.

In the sixth I walked out to resume the business of blocking and stepping away from Brannon's punches. It was becoming routine for me. So routine that I got careless.

I flicked casually at one of his overhand rights, but not hard enough. It boomed over my left and crashed against the side of my jaw.

My head exploded with pain and I dropped to the canvas. The count reached three before I could hear the referee. I forced myself to one knee and rested out an eight-count before I got up. Brannon swarmed over me, a grin on his face and his eyes bright with satisfaction. This was the part of fighting he liked. This was where he got his kicks.

He fought his way out of my clinch and tagged me with a looping left that set me up for the right. It caught me high on the cheek and I spun to the deck. I lay there listening to the crowd roar and then rolled over on my side.

I used the ropes to help me and made it before the referee could get to ten. When Brannon charged in, I covered and dove into a clinch. My glove went to the burning spot on my cheek and came away with streaks of blood from a split. I took punishment the rest of the round, but managed to stick close enough to Brannon so that he couldn't unload any of his power swings.

At the end of the round, Manny got to work on the cut. After a while he stepped back to admire his work. "For what it's worth to you," he said, "Mavis should be enjoying this, but I've got my doubts."

I looked at Mavis and our eyes met for a moment before she looked away.

**IN** the seventh Brannon came out fast. The crowd was on its feet yelling for the kill and Brannon was positive he had it to give. I stepped away from his rush and tied him up. I held on until the referee pried us apart and when Brannon came at me again I repeated the clinch. The crowd booed and Brannon irritably wrestled and bulled his way free.

I felt stronger now, and I used my left to keep him off. I picked up points with light jabs and at the end of the round I knew it was another one in my pocket.

The eighth was tame and in the ninth the ref warned me twice to step up the pace.

In my corner Manny put his hand on my shoulder. "You can get the decision easy if the judges don't get stubborn about it. But that boy will leave the ring thinking he's ten times as good as

he is. Is that what you want, Billy? Nobody's ever knocked you down before."

He stepped in front of me and wiped my forehead with the towel. "This should be a different kind of round. I think it would be better that way. For Brannon. For all of us."

I got to my feet before the bell and I could see it in Mavis' face. She knew that it wasn't working out the way she wanted it to. She could see the confidence in Brannon. He was just starting his ring career. He would go on and on.

**MAVIS** met my eyes, and I knew she was asking something else now. Something she didn't want to see, but something she knew had to be done if she wanted to save her brother from what the ring would do to him.

Brannon was three-quarters of the way across the ring while the sound of the bell still vibrated in the smoky air. This was his last chance to finish me and he was going to give it everything he had.

I stopped his rush with a snapping left and followed it with a hard chop to the head. He back-tracked reluctantly and I followed with two more left hooks.

I levered over another right that rocked him off his feet. He was up at the count of seven, but groggy and bewildered.

I waited for the referee to wipe his gloves and went after Brannon again. My left re-opened the cut along the side of his nose and blood pulsed down to his lips. I chased him across the ring, switching to a body attack when he covered up, and I could feel him wince as my blows dug in.

The ref stepped between us to examine Brannon's cut. After a moment he backed out of the way and signaled for the bout to continue.

I put my body behind a hook to the heart that dropped Brannon to his right knee.

The kid blinked and looked at me. He knew it then.

It was a long way up, but Brannon staggered to his feet.

There wasn't any point to it now. I had done what Mavis wanted. I glanced at the clock and let Brannon clinch. I hooked light punches to his body to make it look good. Brannon recovered toward the end of the round and he began punching again; slow, heavy punches that had a desperate prayer in each one of them.

I was looking down at ringside, searching for Mavis, when the punch caught me. It wasn't a hard punch, but I was off balance when it landed.

I was flat on my back and the count was three when the bell ended the bout.

They might not have wanted to, but they had to give it to me. It was a split decision, the judges made it 7-3 in my favor. The referee saw a different fight and did his best for Brannon. He called it a draw.

It wasn't the way the crowd wanted it. The boys in the dollar seats thought they knew better and their raucous catcalls voiced their opinion.

Manny and I waited in the dressing room for an hour before we went to Dominic's. Manny ordered drinks. "Remind me never to let Miller referee when we fight again."

He watched me and smiled sadly. "Brannon had to have the lesson, Billy. Now you know what Papa meant when he said it hurt him more than it did you."

Ray Holden walked over from the

bar carrying a drink. He leaned over Manny's shoulder. "Looks like we got to revise the scoring system. You been handing out money to the judges, Manny?"

Manny sighed. "No money. Just twenty acres of land. Miller got sore because his was scrub."

Holden staggered slightly and spilled some of his drink as he turned to me. "When's the rematch? You didn't look too good winning a fight flat on your back."

I got to my feet. Ray had it coming and this was the time. I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"There's not going to be a rematch."

I turned and saw Brannon. There was white tape along the side of his nose. He grinned. "I decided to retire and use my head for something beside a target. Losing fights is no fun."

Holden snorted. "You had him down three times. You call that losing?"

Brannon still smiled. "But he got up twice and he could have gotten up the third time." His eyes went over Holden. "I don't think you could do it once. Do

I make myself clear?"

It was quite clear to Holden. He left us.

Brannon studied me for a moment and then held out his hand. "I never really hated you, Riley. I knew better but I listened to Holden."

We shook hands and then Brannon turned to Manny. "Now that I can forget all about training, I suggest that you and I go to the bar and have our drinks there. We'll leave Riley alone with his thoughts."

But I wasn't alone long. Mavis came and sat down at my table. She looked down at the tablecloth, tracing a pattern with her nail. "Riley . . . I really don't know what to say . . . except that I was wrong about you."

I grinned at her. "I guess I was a little punchy myself. Why don't we make this the first time we ever met?"

"All right," she said, and smiled.

I could tell by the warm look in her eyes she didn't care any longer that I was a fighter. As for me, I knew I was setting myself up for a K.O.—but I didn't care, either.

★ THE END

## Six Killers For The Sheriff continued from page 15

their horses up the baking hot main street, Bob Paul squinted at the sleepy buildings in disgust. "Not much of a place," he grunted.

"Give it a chance," the older man replied. "Quite a town after dark."

The sheriff was right. By nine o'clock that night, the Ace In The Hole saloon was doing a booming business. The slap of cards and the thin, metallic rattle of poker chips mingled with the laughter and talk of over a hundred customers. Similar sounds came from half a dozen other establishments down the street.

As Daniels and Bob Paul drifted over to the long mahogany bar, a short, beefy man with a cigar clenched between his teeth pushed over to them. "Evenin', Sheriff," he said pleasantly. There were four or five husky men ranged behind him; they stared menacingly at the sheriff. "Not here on business, I hope."

Daniels leaned back against the bar and hooked his fingers casually around his gun belt. "Could be, Murchison," he said. "Lookin' for two fellers."

"Well don't look in my place or you might not get back to Tombstone. It took me quite a while to get everything back in shape after your last call."

Daniels shook his head sadly. "That's the risk you take in your line of business. Run a decent house and you'll get decent clientele. Not the kind I'm after."

Murchison whitened in anger. "Now, look here, Daniels, I—"

Before he had a chance to finish, Daniels reached out and grabbed the shorter man by his coat and pulled him against the bar. Bob Paul suddenly realized the sheriff was holding a gun in Murchison's belly. The movement was so fast that not another person in the place had noticed. The bruisers behind Murchison didn't have a chance to move.

"You look here, Murchison . . ." Daniels' eyes hardened as he spoke. "Threaten me again and I'll take your place apart just for practice. I'm not out to wreck you and you know it. Stay out of my way and I'll stay out of yours—if I can."

Murchison nodded weakly. "Sure, sure. No offense."

Daniels released him with a smile and slid his gun back into his holster. "No offense intended. Think we can get a drink?"

Murchison waved to the barman who scurried over with a bottle and two glasses. "Help yourself, Sheriff. Anything you like. It's on the house." He moved hastily away with his crew of bouncers.

Bob Paul glanced at Daniels with a look of respect. "Never seen you like that before," he said admiringly. "Always wondered how you'd be in a fight. Now I know."

"Ain't been in a fight yet," Daniels answered as he poured his drink. "Don't hold with them much myself, unless you have to."

"Thash' th' way I feel," came a thick voice behind Daniels. "I say when a man's gotta fight, he's gotta do it." A short, wiry, very drunken cowboy lurched over confidentially. "I'm a peaceful man m'self, but y'know who I'm gonna fight?" he whispered.

Daniels shook his head.

"George!" the drunk bawled. "Thass who."

"Well, give him hell," said Daniels as he picked up the bottle to move down the bar. The cowboy reeled after him.

"Y'don't understan'," he hiccuped. "Thish fellow George stole m'girl. Got lotsa money, this George has, and a big beyootiful watch with rubies an' all in the back. She took one look at the watch an—"

"Rubies in the back," Daniels interrupted sharply. "Sort of like snake eyes?"

"Yep. Three rubies in each eye and—" He paused suspiciously. "Say, you friends of George?" He tightened his grip on his drink. "Cause if y're, you can tell him I ain't afraid of him. I don't give a damn for him." Searching for a way to express his contempt, the cowboy tried to snap his fingers. Unfortunately there was a full glass of whiskey in his hand. It went hurtling across the room into the face of a man passing by.

The man gasped and sprawled back-



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